

# China Open

Sunday, October 1, 2023

Beijing, China

## Aryna Sabalenka

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/S. Kenin

6-1, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Aryna, congratulations on your first-round win today. A quick victory. How were you feeling out there on court? How would you rate your performance today?

ARYNA SABALENKA: Yeah, I'm super happy with the win. I think I played great tennis. Yeah, it's super nice to be back in Beijing. I really enjoyed playing in front of people here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You were in really sensational form out there today. Wanted to get a few more thoughts about how you were feeling on court. Especially I noticed you were losing very few points on your serve. In the first set you might have only lost one point on your serve. How good is it to be able to rely on that kind of form on your serve?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Honestly, I didn't expect to play that good on my serve. On practice, it didn't work that well (smiling). But I was super happy that I was able to bring that level on my serve today. I think it's helped a lot.

I think she didn't even expect that great serving game. So I think that was the key of today's match.

Yeah, I feel great. Conditions were, like, really amazing. I feel like it really suits my game. Yeah, super happy with the win.

**Q. You said you were feeling good with the conditions. Can you talk a little bit about how the Diamond Court is playing. Is it quick? Slow? High-bouncing? Low-bouncing?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: I would say it's slower than the rest of the hard courts tournaments. I kind of like to have this pause to go for my shots. That's what I mean by saying it

really suits my game.

**Q. In terms of how you felt going out on the court, first tournament since New York, first match as No. 1, did it feel any different at all getting up today for this match in terms of expectations, pressure, or did it feel like any other tournament that you've played?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Honestly, no different. Like, as I said before, it's great to achieve this goal, but it's not something I'm really thinking about.

I know that if I'm going to bring my tennis, if I'm going to play my best, if I'm going to fight for it, I'm going to stay there. So I feel like I don't have to focus on the ranking. There is no extra pressure. Nothing changed, honestly.

I was No. 2, and now I'm No. 1. Not a big difference.

**Q. First round playing a former Grand Slam champion is not easy. Because of the new rule of the performance bye, you have to play the first-round match here. When did you know about this rule and how do you feel about the performance bye?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: Well, I mean, I knew they sent this email earlier, that everyone knows about this performance bye, but I kind of like didn't get it. I thought it was like extra byes. I don't understand that. Players getting byes from playing semifinals on the lower tournament, they getting bye on 1000 tournament, I don't get it.

I think you have to own these byes. You have to own it by consistency of your game, not just by playing good at one tournament, then you get this advantage. No, you have to deserve it. I don't understand that. I don't agree with that.

I mean, I'm happy for those players who got it, but I think this is not acceptable. I think -- not I think, but I hope it's not going to be the same later.

I mean, it would be understandable if it would be from 1000 in Guadalajara to 1000 here. I mean, I got it, of course take it. But not from 500 tournament to 1000 tournament.



**Q. You are very fashionable off court. Can you describe your own style off court in your own words? And what is your preparation for tonight for the players party?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: My style? I just random. It's like everything. You can find dresses, you can find jeans, you can find sports style in my fit room. It's so random.

I don't have style. I like to have dress. I like to wearing like a sports style. I'm, like, random girl, you know.

About the players party? I don't know. We'll see. I'll check my bag and see what I have. If I have something nice, I'll go there. If not, I'll just send an email to WTA saying that I have no stuff to wear for tonight (smiling).

**Q. I noticed that you hang out with Paula Badosa before you came to Beijing. Can you tell us what it's like to making a good friend on tour? Is it easy or hard to make a beautiful friendship with other players, especially top players?**

ARYNA SABALENKA: It's actually really tough. It's not happening really often when you can find, like, I would say your soulmate on tour because you compete against each other.

But we had this deal, on court we're opponents, we can scream whatever we want to, but off court we are again friends. We can give one day to each other, depends who wins, to kind of like accept the fact that he lost, but then we are friends again (smiling).

It's tough. I'm super happy that I have her. She's a very nice girl. Have her on my side, it's really important for me.

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